

Remarks in Marlton, New Jersey
October 18, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. Thanks for the warm welcome. It is great to be back in the State of New Jersey. Oh, I know it might surprise some to see a Republican Presidential candidate in New Jersey in late October. The reason why I'm here, with your help, we'll carry the State of New Jersey in November.

We are now 15 days away from a critical election. Many important domestic issues are at stake. I have a positive, hopeful agenda for job creation, broader health coverage, and better public education. Yet all the progress we hope to make depends on the security of our Nation. America is in the middle of a global war on terror, a struggle unlike any we have ever known before. We face an enemy that is determined to kill the innocent and make our country into a battlefield. In the war on terror, there is no place for confusion and no substitute for victory. For the sake of our future and our freedom, we will fight this war with every asset of our national power, and we will prevail.

Laura sends her best. So I asked her to marry me; she said, "Fine, just so long as I never have to give a political speech." [Laughter] I said, "Okay, you got a deal." Fortunately, she didn't hold me to that deal. The American people—a lot of Americans have seen her give a speech, and when they do, they see a compassionate, strong, warm woman.

I'm proud to have been standing on the stage with Bernie Kerik. He knows something about security. He's lived security all his life, and I want to thank him for his dedication and his service to the people of this country.

I want to thank Congressman Jim Saxton for being here today. And thank you for bringing your daughter, Jennifer. I want to thank Congressman Scott Garrett for joining us today. Congressman, thank you.

Congressman Frank LoBiondo—thanks for coming, Frank and Tina. I want to thank Congressman Chris Smith and Marie for joining us. The chairman of the Republican Party was born and raised in this county. He's doing a fabulous job. Welcome my friend Ed Gillespie. Thanks for coming, Ed.

I want to thank all the State senators and statehouse members who are here. I want to thank the grassroots activists. I want to thank you for what you're going to do during the next 15 days. Put up the signs. Call the phones. Get the people out to vote. We're going to win the State of New Jersey and win a great victory in November.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. During the decade of the 1990s, our times often seemed peaceful on the surface. Yet, beneath that surface were currents of danger. Terrorists were training and planning in distant camps. In 1993, terrorists made their first attack on the World Trade Center. In 1998, terrorists bombed American Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. And then came the attack on the U.S.S. *Cole* in 2000, which cost the lives of 17 American sailors. In this period, America's response to terrorism was generally piecemeal and symbolic. The terrorists concluded this was a sign of weakness, and their plans became more ambitious,* and their attacks became more deadly.

Most Americans still felt that terrorism was something distant and something that would not strike on a large scale in America. That is the time that my opponent wants to go back to—

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. —a time when danger was real and growing, but we didn't know

* White House correction.

it, a time when some thought terrorism was only a “nuisance.”

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. But that very attitude is what blinded America to the war being waged against us. And by not seeing the war, our Government had no comprehensive strategy to fight it. September the 11th, 2001, changed all that. We realized that the apparent security of the 1990s was an illusion.

The people of New Jersey were among the first to understand how the world changed. On September the 11th, from places like Hoboken and Jersey City, you could look across the Hudson River and see the Twin Towers burning. We will never forget that day, and we will never forget our duty to defend America.

Out of the horror of that day, we also saw good emerge. America has seen a new generation of heroes, police, firefighters, members of the military. Americans have felt a new sense of community in neighborhoods and across our country. We’ve been reminded that all of us are a part of a great American story that is larger than our individual lives, and we have been reminded of our solemn responsibility to defend freedom.

September the 11th also changed the way we should look at national security, but not everyone realizes it. The choice we face in this election, the first Presidential election since September the 11th, is how our Nation will defeat this threat. Will we stay on the offensive against those who want to attack us——

Audience members. Yes!

The President. ——or will we take action only after we are attacked?

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. Will we make decisions in the light of September the 11th or continue to live in the mirage of safety that was actually a time of gathering threats? And in this time of choosing, I want all Americans to know you can count on me

to fight our enemies and defend our freedom.

Winning the war on terror requires more than tough-sounding words repeated in the election season. America needs clear moral purpose and leaders who will not waver, especially in the tough times. And winning the war on terror requires a strategy for victory. Unlike my opponent, I understand the struggle America faces, and I have a strategy to win.

Our first duty in the war on terror is to protect the homeland. This morning at the White House, I signed a strong law that will make our Nation more secure. With the 2005 Homeland Security Appropriations Act, we are providing essential funding for Coast Guard patrols and port security, for the Federal air marshal program, and for technology that will defend aircraft against missiles. We’re adding new resources to patrol our borders and to verify the identity of foreign visitors to America. We need to know who’s coming in and out of our country.

The new law includes vital money for first-responders and for better security of chemical facilities and nuclear plants and water treatment plants and bridges and subways and tunnels. All these measures show the unwavering commitment of our Government. We will do everything in our power to protect the American people.

The law I signed today is part of a broad effort to defend America against new dangers. After September the 11th, we created the Department of Homeland Security to make sure our Government agencies are working together. We’re transforming the FBI into an agency whose primary focus is stopping terrorism. Through Project Bio-Shield, we are developing new vaccines and treatments against biological attacks. We’ve trained more than a half million first-responders across America.

To protect America, we passed the PATRIOT Act, giving law enforcement many of the same tools to fight terrorists that they already had to fight drug cartels and

organized crime. Since September the 11th, law enforcement professionals have stopped terrorist activities in Columbus, Ohio; San Diego, California; Portland, Oregon; Seattle, Washington; Buffalo, New York; and other places, including New Jersey, where we apprehended an arms dealer who was allegedly trying to sell shoulder-fired missiles to terrorists.

My opponent voted for the PATRIOT Act, but now he wants to weaken it. There are plenty of safeguards in this law, making sure that civil liberties are protected and searches are authorized by court order. By seeking to dilute the PATRIOT Act, my opponent is taking the eye off the ball. The danger to America is not the PATRIOT Act or the good people who use it; the danger to America is the terrorists. And we will not let up in this fight.

To protect America, our country needs the best possible intelligence. Chairman Tom Kean and other members of the September the 11th Commission made thoughtful and valuable recommendations on intelligence reform. We are already implementing the vast majority of those recommendations that can be enacted without a vote of Congress. We're expanding and strengthening the capabilities of the CIA. We've established the Terrorist Threat Integration Center so we can bring together all the available intelligence on terrorist threats to one place.

But other changes require new laws. Congress needs to create the position of the National Intelligence Director and take other measures to make our intelligence community more effective. These reforms are necessary to stay ahead of the threats. I urge Congress to act quickly so I can sign them into law.

My opponent has taken a different approach, and it shows in his record. Just one year after the first attack on the World Trade Center in 1993, Senator Kerry proposed a \$6 billion cut in the Nation's intelligence budget.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. But the majority of his colleagues ignored his irresponsible proposal. In 1995, he tried to cut intelligence funding again, and this time he could not get a single Member of the United States Senate to support his bill. And that's an important difference between us. Senator Kerry has a record of trying to weaken American intelligence. I am working every day to strengthen American intelligence.

In a free and open society, it is impossible to protect against every threat. So second, we must pursue a comprehensive strategy against terror. The best way to prevent attacks is to stay on the offense against the enemy overseas. We are waging a global campaign from the mountains of central Asia to the deserts of the Middle East and from the Horn of Africa to the Philippines.

These efforts are paying off. Since September the 11th, 2001, more than three-quarters of Al Qaida's key members and associates have been brought to justice. The rest of them know we're coming after them.

After September the 11th, we set a new direction for American policy and enforced a doctrine that is clear to all: "If you support or harbor terrorists, you're equally guilty of terrorist murder." We destroyed the terror camps that trained thousands of killers in Afghanistan. We removed the Taliban from power. We have persuaded Governments in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to recognize the enemy and join the fight. We ended the regime of Saddam Hussein, which sponsored terror. Iraq's new Government under Prime Minister Allawi is hunting down terrorists in Iraq. We sent a message to Libya, which has now given up weapons of mass destruction programs and handed nuclear materials and equipment over to the United States. We have acted, through diplomacy and force, to shrink the area where the terrorists can operate freely, and that strategy has the terrorists on the run.

My opponent has a fundamental misunderstanding on the war on terror. A reporter recently asked Senator Kerry how September the 11th changed him. He replied, "It didn't change me much at all."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. His unchanged worldview is obvious from the policies he still advocates. He has said this war is primarily an intelligence and law enforcement operation. He has declared, we should not respond to threats until they are, quote, "imminent." He has complained that my administration, quote, "relies unwisely on the threat of military preemption against terrorist organizations." Let me repeat that. He says that preemptive action is "unwise," not only against regimes but even against terrorist organizations.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Senator Kerry's approach would permit a response only after America is hit.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. This kind of September the 10th attitude is no way to protect our country. The war on terror is a real war with deadly enemies, not simply a police operation. In an era of weapons of mass destruction, waiting for threats to arrive at our doorsteps is to invite disaster. Tyrants and terrorists will not give us polite notice before they attack our country. As long as I'm the Commander in Chief, I will confront dangers abroad so we do not have to face them here at home.

The case of one terrorist shows what is at stake. The terrorist leader we face in Iraq today, the one responsible for beheading American hostages, the one responsible for many of the car bombings and attacks against Iraqis, is a man named Zarqawi. Before September the 11th, Zarqawi ran a camp in Afghanistan that trained terrorists in the use of explosives and poisons—until coalition forces destroyed that camp. He fled to Saddam Hussein's Iraq, where he received medical care and set up operations with some two dozen terrorist associ-

ates. He operated in Baghdad and worked with associates in northern Iraq who ran camps to train terrorists and conducted chemical and biological experiments—until coalition forces arrived and ended those operations. With nowhere to operate openly, Zarqawi has gone underground and is making a stand in Iraq.

Here, the difference between my opponent and me is very clear. Senator Kerry believes that fighting Zarqawi and other terrorists in Iraq is a "diversion" from the war on terror. I believe that fighting and defeating these killers in Iraq is a central commitment in the war on terror.

If Zarqawi and his associates were not busy fighting American forces in Iraq, does Senator Kerry think they would be leading productive and peaceful lives? *[Laughter]* Clearly, these killers would be plotting and acting to murder innocent civilians in free nations, including our own. By facing these terrorists far away, our military is making the United States of America more secure.

Third, to win the war on terror, America must work with allies and lead the world with clarity. And that is exactly what we are doing. The flags of 64 nations fly at U.S. Central Command Headquarters in Tampa, Florida, representing coalition countries that are working openly with us in the war on terror. Dozens more are helping quietly in important ways. Today, all 26 NATO nations have personnel either in Iraq, Afghanistan, or both. America's allies are standing with us in the war on terror, and we are grateful.

My opponent promises that he would do better with our allies, yet he's decided that the way to build alliances is to insult our friends. As a candidate for President, Senator Kerry has managed to offend or alienate almost every one of America's fighting allies in the war on terror. He has called the countries serving alongside us in Iraq, quote, "a trumped-up coalition of the bribed, the coerced, the bought, and the extorted."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He has dismissed the sacrifice of 14 nations that have lost forces in Iraq, calling those nations “window dressing.” In our debate a few weeks ago, he declared, “When we went in, there were three countries: Great Britain, Australia, and the United States.” He left out Poland, one of the first countries to see combat on the first days of hostilities in Iraq. He never shows respect for some of the 30 nations that are serving courageously in Iraq today.

Senator Kerry even has disregarded the contributions of Iraqis who are fighting for their freedom. When he speaks of coalition casualties in Iraq, he doesn’t count the hundreds of Iraqis who have given their lives fighting the terrorists and the insurgents. When Iraq’s Prime Minister came to Washington to address Congress last month, Senator Kerry did not show up. Instead, he called a press conference and questioned the Prime Minister’s credibility. The Prime Minister of Iraq is a brave man who survived the assassins of Saddam. The Prime Minister of Iraq deserves the respect of the world, not the scorn of a politician.

As part of his foreign policy, Senator Kerry has talked about applying a “global test.”

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. As far as I can tell, it comes down to this: Before we act to defend ourselves, he thinks we need permission from foreign capitals.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Yet, even the gulf war coalition in 1991 did not pass Senator Kerry’s “global test.” Even with the United Nations approval, he voted against removing Saddam Hussein from Kuwait.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. If that vast, U.N.-supported operation did not pass his test, nothing ever could. Senator Kerry’s “global test” is nothing more than an excuse to constrain the actions of our own country in a dangerous world.

I believe in strong alliances. I believe in respecting other countries and working with them and seeking their advice. But I will never submit our national security decisions to a veto of a foreign government.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. Fourth, we will win the war on terror and make America safer by advancing the cause of freedom and democracy. Free societies are hopeful societies which do not nurture bitterness or the ideologies of terror and murder. Free governments in the broader Middle East will fight the terrorists instead of harboring them. And this is why a free Iraq and a free Afghanistan are vital to peace in that region and vital to the security interests of our country.

After decades of tyranny in the broader Middle East, progress toward freedom will not come easily. Yet, that progress is coming faster than many would have said possible. Across a troubled region, we are seeing a movement toward elections, greater rights for women, and open discussion of peaceful reform. The election in Afghanistan less than 2 weeks ago was a landmark event in the history of liberty. That election was a tremendous defeat for the terrorists.

My opponent has complained that we are trying to, quote, “impose” democracy on people in that region. Is that what he sees in Afghanistan, unwilling people having democracy forced upon them? We removed the Taliban by force, but democracy is rising in that country because the Afghan people, like everywhere, want to live in freedom.

No one forced them to register by the millions or stand in long lines at polling places. On the day of that historic election, an Afghan widow brought all four of her daughters to vote alongside her. She said this, she said, “When you see women here lined up to vote, this is something profound. I never dreamed this day would come.” But that woman’s dream

finally arrived, as it will one day across the greater Middle East. [Applause] Thank you.

The dream of freedom is moving forward in Iraq. The terrorists know it, and they hate it, and they fight it. And we can expect more violence as Iraq moves toward free elections. Yet, every day in Iraq, our coalition is defeating the enemy's strategic objectives. The enemy seeks to disrupt the march toward democracy. But an Iraqi independent electoral commission is up and running, political parties are planning campaigns, voter registration will begin next month, and free and fair Iraqi elections will be held on schedule this coming January.

The enemy seeks to establish sanctuaries in Iraq from which to commit acts of terror. But Iraqi and coalition forces are on the offensive in Fallujah and North Babil and have restored Government control in Samarra, Tall 'Afar, and Najaf.

The enemy wants to make Iraqis afraid to join security forces. But every week, more and more Iraqis answer the call to arms. More than 100,000 soldiers, police, and border guards are already trained, equipped, and bravely serving their country. And well over 200,000 will be in place by the end of 2005.

The enemy seeks to break the will of the Iraqi people. But as Prime Minister Allawi told the Congress, Iraqis are hopeful, optimistic, and determined to prevail in their struggle for liberty.

After the enemy has failed in so many goals, what can these killers do now? They can fill up our TV screens with horrible images of suicide bombings and beheadings. These scenes are chaotic and horrific, but they're not a complete picture of what's happening in Iraq. A recent poll found that more than 75 percent of Iraqis want to vote, and they have confidence in the electoral progress. And more than 75 percent are hopeful about the future of their country. The violent acts of a few will not divert Iraqis and our coalition from the mission

we have accepted. Iraq will be free. Iraqis will be secure. And the terrorists will fail.

My opponent has a different outlook. While America does the hard work of fighting terror and spreading freedom, he has chosen the easy path of protest and defeatism. He refuses to acknowledge progress or praise the growing democratic spirit in Iraq. He has not made democracy a priority of his foreign policy. But what is his strategy, his vision, his answer? Is he content to watch and wait as anger and resentment grow for more decades in the Middle East, feeding more terrorism until radicals without conscience gain the weapons to kill without limit?

Giving up the fight might seem easier in the short run, but we learned on September the 11th that if violence and fanaticism are not opposed at their source, they will find us where we live. America is safer today because Afghanistan and Iraq are fighting terrorists instead of harboring them. And I believe future generations of Americans will be spared violence and fear as democracy and hope and governments that oppose terror multiply across the Middle East.

Victory in the war on terror requires victory in Iraq. If a terror regime were allowed to reemerge in Iraq, the terrorists would find a home, a source of funding, and vital support. They would correctly conclude that free nations do not have the will to defend themselves. When Iraq becomes a free society at the heart of the Middle East, an ally in the war on terror, and a model for hopeful reform in a region that needs hopeful reform, the terrorists will suffer a crushing defeat and every free nation will be more secure.

Unfortunately, Senator Kerry does not share our commitment to victory in Iraq. For 3 years, depending on the headlines, the poll numbers, and political calculation, he has taken almost every conceivable position on Iraq.

Audience members. Flip-flop! Flip-flop! Flip-flop!

The President. First, he said Saddam Hussein was a threat, and he voted for the war. Then he voted against funds for bullets and body armor for the troops he had voted to send into battle.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He declared himself an antiwar candidate. Months later, he said that knowing everything we know now, he would have still voted for the war. Then he said the war was a “mistake,” an “error,” or “diversion.” Having gone back and forth so many times, the Senator from Massachusetts has now flip-flopped his way to a dangerous position. My opponent finally has settled on a strategy, a strategy of retreat.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He has talked about artificial timetables to pull our troops out of Iraq. He has sent the signal that America’s overriding goal in Iraq would be to leave, even if the job is not done.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. And that approach would lead to a major defeat in the war on terror. So long as I’m the Commander in Chief, America will never retreat in the face of the terrorists. [Applause] Thank you.

We will keep our word to the Iraqi people. We’ll make sure Iraqi forces can defend their country, and then American troops will return home with the honor they have earned.

On each of the four commitments needed to prevail in the war on terror, there is a clear choice before the American people. My opponent wants to weaken the PATRIOT Act and has a history of trying to undermine our intelligence services. I will take every necessary measure to protect the homeland. The Senator wants to wage the war on terror on the defensive. I will take the fight to the enemy. The Senator insults our friends in the world and wants to please a few critics. I’m working with our friends for the sake of freedom and security. The Senator is skeptical and pessimistic about democracy in Iraq and critical of our efforts in the broader Middle East.

I know that the advance of freedom is the path to security and peace.

In all these areas, my opponent’s views would make America less secure and the world more dangerous. And none of these positions should come as a surprise. Over a 20-year career in the United States Senate, Senator Kerry has been consistently wrong on the major national security issues facing our country. The Senator who voted against the \$87 billion for our troops in Afghanistan and Iraq is the same Senator who has voted against vital weapons systems during his entire career. He tried to cancel the Patriot missile, which shot down Scud missiles in Operation Desert Storm. He opposed the B-1 bomber, which was critical to victory in the Afghan campaign. He opposed the B-2 stealth bomber, which delivered devastating air strikes on Taliban positions. He opposed the modernized F-14D, which we used against terrorists in Tora Bora. He opposed the Apache helicopter, which destroyed enemy tanks and anti-aircraft missile launchers in Iraq.

The Senator who is skeptical of democracy in Iraq also spoke with sympathy for a communist dictator in Nicaragua in the 1980s and criticized the democracy movement as “terrorism.” His misguided policies would have impeded the spread of freedom in Central America. The Senator who claims the world is more dangerous since America started fighting the war on terror is the same Senator who said that Ronald Reagan’s policies of peace through strength actually made America less safe——

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. ——the same Senator who said the Reagan Presidency was 8 years of “moral darkness.”

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. In this campaign, Senator Kerry can run from his record, but he cannot hide. [Applause] Thank you.

The Senator’s long record shows a clear pattern on national security. He has consistently opposed a stronger military. He has consistently looked for excuses to constrain

American power. He has consistently shown poor judgment on the great issues of war and peace. When one Senator among a hundred holds a policy of weakness, it doesn't make a lot of difference. But the Presidency is an office of great responsibility and consequence.

I have a record in office as well, and all Americans have seen that record. September the 14th,* 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It's a day I will never forget. Bernie might remember the workers in hardhats that were yelling at me and yelling at us, "Whatever it takes." A man grabbed me by the arm, just coming out of the rubble, and he said, "Do not let me down." I have a responsibility that goes on. I wake up every morning thinking about how to make our country more secure. I acted again and again to protect the American people. I will never relent in defending our country, whatever it takes.

In a new term——

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. In a new term as your President, we will finish the work we have

started. We will stand up for terror—we will stand up for freedom. And on November the 2d, my fellow Americans, I ask that you stand with me.

God bless. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:21 p.m. at the Evesham Recreation Center. In his remarks, he referred to Bernard B. Kerik, former commissioner, New York City Police Department; Tina LoBiondo, wife of Representative Frank A. LoBiondo; Marie Smith, wife of Representative Christopher H. Smith; Edward W. Gillespie, chairman, Republican National Committee; Thomas H. Kean, Chairman, National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission); former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; and former President Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks in Marlton October 18, 2004

Listen, thank you all for coming. So you're wondering what a Republican Presidential candidate is doing in New Jersey 15 days until the election? I'll tell you, what I'm doing here is I'm sending a strong message that with your help, we can carry New Jersey on November the 2d.

I'm so honored you all came out to say hello. Thank you so very much for your friendship, for your support. Make sure your friends go to the polls. Make sure your neighbors go to the polls. And tell them if they want a safer America, a

stronger America, and a better America, to put me and Dick Cheney back into office.

God bless you all. I'm headed down to Florida. I'm working. We're going to win. God bless. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:18 p.m. at the Evesham Recreation Center. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

* White House correction.